During the 4th Session of India-China Joint Group meeting on Economic Relations and Trade, Science and Technology held in Beijing on 4-5th Jan., 1993, both sides reviewed the status of border trade and agreed in principle for its extension to other points on the India-China border. Details in this regard are under consideration.

Steps for passing on the benefits of whole sale price index to consumer by retailers

*93. SHRI RAJNI RANJAN SAHU: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item that appeared in the Indian Express dated the 30th January, 1993 under the caption "Sharp plunge in the wholesale price of provisions, Retailers take customers for a ride"; and

(b) if so, what steps Government are taking or propose to take to ensure that the benefit of fall in wholesale price is passed on to the consumers by retailers?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI A. K. ANTONY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There is always a time lag between changes in Wholesale Price Index and the consequent change in the Retail Price Index, The magnitude of variation varies from commodity to commodity and market to market. The Retail Prices are bound to be higher than the wholesale prices and part of the difference between the two prices may be due to varietal or quality considerations, differences in transport and handling cost and the demand/supply position of a particular commodity at a particular point of time. During the period April, 1992 to December, 1992, whereas the rate of inflation, measured in terms of percentage variation in W.P.I. declined from 13.9% to 8.4%, the decline in the Consumer Price Index, which reflects the retail prices, was from 14.4% to 8.0%. In respect of some of the essential commodities, the respective percentage variations in the wholesale and retail prices in Delhi during the period January, 1992 to January, 1993 is as under:—

S.No.	Commodity	Wholesale Prices % Variation	Retail Prices % Variation
1.	Atta	−19.14	−15.18
2.	Arhar	−35.26	−26.12
3.	Rice Permal	+1.74	+2.77
4.	Maize	−26.82	−10.53
5.	Mustard Oil	−15.79	−16.43
6.	Wheat	−18.20	−5.30

It may be observed from the above that decline in wholesale prices of essential commodities has had a direct bearing on the fall in retail price.

Extension given to Officers by E.P.F. Authorities

*94. SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that certain retired officers, gazetted/non gazetted have been given extension/re-employment by the E.P.F. authorities during the last three years;

(b) if so, full details thereof;

(c) whether extension/re-employment had been given as in (a) above against the rules and policy of the Government;

(d) if so, reasons and persons responsible for this; and

(e) the reaction of Government regarding extension/re-employment in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P.A. SANGMA): (a) and (b) During the last three years, no officer has been given re-employment in the EPF Organisation. However, during 1991, one officer of the rank of Regional Provident Fund Commissioner (Gr. II) was given extension for four months, and during 1992, two officers of the rank of Regional

Provident Fund Commissioner (Gr. I) were given extension for six months each.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) and (e) Do not arise.

Export of Wool And Woollen Items

*95. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have devised any plan to raise the exports of wool and woollen items; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY): (a) and (b) The Plan for raising the export of woollen items is to expand the production base, to diversify the markets and to diversify the product range.

Export of Readymade Garments to Europe

*96. SHRI E. BALANANDAN:
SHRI MD. SALIM:

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country has greater prospects of export of readymade garments to European community countries this year; and

(b) if so, what are the plans of Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY): (a) and (b) India's garment exports to European Economic Community have shown improvement in 1992 as compared to 1991 notwithstanding the recessionary conditions prevailing in the European Economic Community market. It is expected that during 1993, there will be further improvement. The establishment of single European Community (EC) market from 1st January, 1993 is also likely to contribute positively to our export performance.

Loss in Jute Market

*97. DR. SANJAYA SINH: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of Government has been drawn to a news item which appeared in the Indian Express dated the 25th January, 1993 under the caption 'India on the brink of lossing Rs. 100-crores in Jute Market' stating that India is on the brink of losing 75 per cent of the world sacking market in jute if Government do not take steps to lobby the cause of jute entrepreneurs in the international market; and

(b) if so, what action Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The capability of the jute industry in India to manufacture and supply non-toxic jute bags has been publicised in various fora including the meetings of the International Jute Organisation in order to capture the market for packaging of foodstuffs.

Private sector Participation in Distribution of Coal

*98. SHRI P. UPENDRA:
SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA:

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently allowed private sector in coal as a part of the new distribution scheme;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what is the extent upto which the consumers would be benefited and the middlemen would be eliminated?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL